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Statement from Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers

Marie Lopez Rogers

My Turn

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Simply stated, to lead is to direct a course of action. To partner means jointly working together with associates. In an effort to ensure the safety and financial security of its residents, the Avondale City Council joined in a partnership with the cities of Goodyear and Litchfield Park to accelerate the widening of Interstate 10.

There have been many successful partnerships among Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park in the past. From relatively small achievements such as partnering on hazardous household waste days to jointly funding major street improvement or public safety projects, our three cities have enjoyed a strong, solid working relationship for years. Most recently, when a member of the Avondale Police Department passed, Goodyear's professional police officers not only assisted in the duty of escorting his casket, their officers patrolled Avondale streets to allow grieving officers to attend their comrade's funeral.

Just like these many successful partnerships in the past, Avondale set out to share in a common goal with Goodyear and Litchfield Park in accelerating the widening of I-10 through a groundbreaking coalition of southwest Valley cities leading the charge to secure funding for this joint effort. From the start of this coalition, the Avondale City Council has held a strong, consistent commitment to widen I-10 in a manner that was expeditious, yet fair to our taxpayers.

Litchfield Park Mayor Tom Schoaf and I have always worked to make sure that our efforts reflected the true values of a partnership. Regrettably, my counterpart in Goodyear, Jim Cavanaugh, has sought to undermine the foundation of this partnership by circulating misinformation via the media and to Goodyear residents about the very nature of this partnership. He appears to have forgotten that in a true partnership, members communicate directly, openly and honestly with each other.

However, not too long ago, Mayor Cavanaugh took it upon himself to take part in a deal with the East Valley, without the knowledge of Avondale and Litchfield Park. I firmly objected to this because the outcome of this deal had a serious impact on the taxpayers of our three cities.

In effect, Mayor Cavanaugh compromised the \$10 million that Avondale and Litchfield Park worked so hard to secure through the legislative process by giving away \$6 million - more than half of what the Legislature appropriated. Avondale went back to the table through the MAG process, and was able to secure \$7 million to assist in the acceleration of the widening of I-10.

Mayor Cavanaugh has labeled the fiscal responsibility that I and my colleagues on the City Council bear as a "crusade" about money. Nothing is farther from the truth. It is ridiculous to say that the leaders of Avondale and Litchfield Park care less than our Goodyear counterparts for the safety of the commuting public on I-10.

Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park started a partnership to commit our precious, limited resources to bear the burden of accelerating the widening of a federal highway used daily by tens of thousands of people, many of whom do not reside in our city borders. We have chosen to lead and partner - but that doesn't mean agreeing to unfairly passing on additional tax burden to our residents without hesitation or consultation. Avondale has and will always act in a way that shows fiscal responsibility to the public for the funds we are entrusted with. To that end, I have just returned from Washington, D.C., to seek support for this project by meeting with our congressional representatives.

As a leader and a partner, I call upon Mayor Cavanaugh to honor his commitment to his partners and to stop making deals on the side. As a leader with integrity, Mayor Cavanaugh should come to the table to discuss this critical issue face to face rather than using newspapers and newsletters to rally support for his "solution" - which entails Southwest Valley residents having to carry a heavier tax burden for everyone's safety. The fact is we share common goals and borders. We should also share common courtesy.

Marie Lopez Rogers is the mayor of Avondale. She can be reached at mlopezrogers@avondale.org.